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Occupational Stress in Organizations: A Study of SSI Units of MIDC, Nagpur

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ABSTRACT

Occupational stress often shows high dissatisfaction among the employees, job mobility, burnout, poor work performance and less effective interpersonal relations at work. This study has demonstrated that stress exists in organizations, and managers in various organizations must come up with various interventions to manage occupational stress.

KEYWORDS: Stress management, occupational stress

Introduction

Occupational stress has been of great concern to the management, employees, and other stakeholders of organizations. Occupational stress researchers agree that stress is a serious problem in many organizations (Cooper and Cartwright, 1994; Varca, 1999; Ornelas and Kleiner 2003). The cost of occupational stress is very high in many organizations. For instance, the International Labor Organization (ILO) reports that inefficiencies arising from occupational stress may cost up to 10 percent of a country's GNP (Midgley, 1996). At a personal level, occupational stress might lead to increased morbidity and mortality (Mark, Jonathan and Gregory, 2003).

Occupational stress is defined as the perception of a discrepancy between environmental demands (stressors) and individual capacities to fulfill these demands (Topper, 2007; Vermunt and Steensma, 2005; Ornelas and Kleiner, 2003; Varca, 1999). Christo and Pienaar (2006) for example, argued that the causes of occupational stress include perceived loss of job, and security, sitting for long periods of time or heavy lifting, lack of safety, complexity of repetitiveness and lack of autonomy in the job. In addition, occupational stress is caused by lack of resources and equipment; work schedules (such as working late shifts or overtime) and organizational climate are considered as contributors to employees stress. Occupational stress often shows high dissatisfaction among the employees, job mobility, burnout, poor work performance and less effective interpersonal relations at work (Manshor, Rodrigue, and Chong, 2003). Johnson (2001) similarly argued that interventions like identifying or determining the signs of stress, identifying the possible causes for the signs and developing possible proposed solutions for each signs are required. These measures allow individuals to build coping skills and develop strategies to develop individualized stress management plans that include eliminating the sources of stress. Moreover, increasing individual coping skills is another intervention which will be used by the management to minimize stress.

Topper (2007) defines stress as a person's psychological and physiological response to the perception of demand and challenge. Nelson and Quick (1994) for example posit that stress is one of the most creatively ambiguous words, with as many interpretations as there are people who use the word, as even the experts do not agree on its definition. While Rees and Redfern (2000) assert that there is no universally accepted definition of the term stress, Ornelas and Kleiner (2003) argue that stress is the by-product of modern life that results from our efforts of trying to balance the demands of the workplace and of family life.

The above definitions confirm what other researchers have observed when it comes to the definition of stress, that it is ambiguous and can be quite confusing. Beehr (1998) states that job stress is particularly an area of research with the potential to be plagued by confusion because of the general, nontechnical, and popular usage of the word stress. To add to the ambiguity that already exists concerning the term stress it seems most researchers classify stress to be either"good stress" or "bad stress". Good stress being the kind of stress that is positive and motivates employees to perform (Bland, 1999) and bad stress being the kind of stress that brings negative consequences.

To try and avoid this confusion over the term stress, most researchers have opted to interpret the word stress in relation to their work or study. For instance, Hausman (2001) defined stress as the uncertainty and even fear in connection with the implementation of new technology and systems between organizations.

Varca (1999) defined stress by relating it to the environment. She gave the definition of a stressful environment as a gap between the environmental demands and personal resources to meet those demands.

Hypothesis

H1: That the outcomes associated with the occupational stress adversely affect the organization

Research Methodology

Data collected through the SSI of MIDC Nagpur. Total 100 questionnaires that were randomly distributed to the sampled employees of MIDC Nagpur, 75 questionnaires were duly completed and returned giving a return rate of 75%.

Results

On the variable of unfair treatment by supervisors, 62% of the respondents disagreed. This indicates that supervisors treat their employees fairly well. Perceptions of the employees on variable work load as the cause of stress, 89% of the respondents agreed that work overload was the cause of stress they experienced at the workplace. Increase of work load due to shortage of staff is a major stress factor among employees in various organizations. The respondents (72%) agreed that inadequate resources to do their jobs right was another source of stress. This negatively affects the performance of employees. These resources include financial, equipment, information and materials. On uncertainty about promotion, the results indicate that 62% of the respondents agreed that uncertainty about promotion in their organization is a source of stress among the employees. Generally, past performance should be rewarded by either seniority or merit promotion.

On whether work/family conflict was a source of stress, 55% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Lack of superior interest in personal problems was also listed as a stressor and 53% of the respondents agreed and 74% of the respondents agreed that high responsibility associated with the job was a source of stress. This reflects that employees are not trained or oriented properly to take up added responsibilities and thus it acts as a source of stress.

However, 71% of the respondents disagreed to the statement that excessive supervision and criticism by supervisors was a source of stress. This indicates that the supervisors support their employees in discharging their duties when and where necessary. 66% of the respondents agreed that a rigid and authoritative system was a source of stress in their workplace. This also indicates that there is lack of employee empowerment in organizations. Lack of employee empowerment in many organizations is a major source of stress to the employees and it has contributed highly to employee turnover.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that stress exists in SSI units of MIDC Nagpur, and managers in various organizations must come up with various

interventions to manage occupational stress. The traditional approach of counseling employees is not enough to manage stress. Therefore, there is The findings of this study indicate that occupational stress is mainly caused by the increase of work load, uncertainty about the future, poor communication in organizations, insufficient resources and conflicts. The findings also reveal that the outcomes associated with the occupational stress adversely affect the organization, especially in reducing efficiency in organization operations, increasing employee turnover, and the expenditure of health costs of employees, low motivation and accidents.

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